

Libby -
Troy
Assessment

EPA estimates on toxicity of Libby Asbestos available for public comment and independent scientist review



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Review of toxicity values that will guide final cleanup actions at Libby Asbestos Superfund site

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(Denver, Colorado – August 25, 2011) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is providing the public with an opportunity to comment on draft toxicity values for a unique form of asbestos called Libby Amphibole asbestos. The toxicity assessment provides a toxicological review of a specific type of asbestos found in northwest Montana and proposes draft toxicity values for both cancer and non-cancer health effects. When final, the toxicity values will help EPA and the residents of Libby and Troy, Montana determine the best path forward for asbestos cleanup and the protection of public health at the Libby Asbestos Superfund site. Today's announcement is the latest step in EPA's continuing efforts to protect human health by reducing exposure to Libby Amphibole asbestos.

EPA is releasing the draft toxicity assessment for public comment and peer review by EPA's Science Advisory Board (SAB). Today's Federal Register notice calls for a 60-day public comment period from August 25 to October 24, 2011. A public listening session also is planned on Oct. 6, 2011. The Federal Register notice announces the beginning of an external review process that provides the public with an opportunity to comment on the draft toxicity assessment and the science used to develop the Libby Amphibole asbestos toxicity values.

To learn about the draft toxicity assessment and how to submit comments and participate in the listening session, visit <http://www.epa.gov/ncea>. Copies of the assessment and Federal Register notice will be available in the EPA Information Office in Libby as well as the Lincoln County and Troy, Montana Libraries. Information on how to comment and participate in the Oct. 6 listening session also will be available at the Information Office and libraries.

"This is an important step towards developing the best science to finish the job of protecting public health in Libby and Troy," said Jim Martin, EPA's regional administrator in Denver. "Our intent is to move forward with the input of independent experts and local residents. Once finalized, these toxicity values will help guide remaining cleanup actions and identify exposure prevention practices to protect human health."

EPA announced initial draft toxicity values at a public meeting in Libby on May 3, 2011. EPA released the draft information to the residents earlier than usual in the scientific evaluation process to ensure the community was fully informed. Since that time, the values have undergone a review by scientists at EPA and other federal agencies. These reviews did not result in any significant changes to the draft toxicity values shared on May 3.

Based on requests from the community, the final toxicity values for Libby Amphibole asbestos will be used to develop EPA's final risk assessment at the Libby Asbestos Superfund site. EPA will use these toxicity values to evaluate risks to adults, teens and children who may be exposed to Libby Amphibole asbestos during activities such as housework, gardening, mowing, bicycling or working in an office or outside.

Since 1999, EPA has worked to reduce risk of exposure to Libby Amphibole asbestos by focusing on removing the largest sources of exposure. EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson in 2009 declared a public health emergency in Libby, a first-of-its-kind action that recognized serious impacts to public health. To date, the agency has spent more than \$370 million and has safely removed more than 873,350 cubic yards of asbestos-contaminated soil from source areas at 1,509 commercial and residential properties. Although EPA has made significant progress in helping to remove the threat of asbestos in the land and

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air and reduce the risks of lung cancer and other respiratory problems, actual and potential releases of amphibole asbestos remain a concern in Libby.

Preliminary conclusions in the draft assessment are that the cancer risk value for Libby Amphibole asbestos is similar to the current Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) cancer risk value for other forms of asbestos. The preliminary assessment of non-cancer effects indicates the potential for detrimental health effects at low exposure levels. This is the first EPA non-cancer toxicity value for asbestos.

EPA is conducting the review of the draft health assessment under a process prescribed by IRIS. The results of this assessment will affect states and private industry groups with Superfund cleanup responsibilities at sites where Libby Amphibole asbestos is present. The proposed toxicity values in this draft assessment will also be useful in evaluating risk from potential exposures in other environments where Amphibole asbestos may be present. EPA expects to issue its final health assessment in September 2012.

For more information about asbestos visit <http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/>.

For more information on EPA's cleanup activities in Libby and Troy visit <http://www.epa.gov/libby>.